

(John) 08 - What He Takes He Breaks

by Alan Redpath

Jesus teaches us that He is the Bread of Life, and that we must rest and take care of our bodies in order to effectively reach people for Him.

Duration: 48:53

Scripture: Mark 6:7-41, 1 Corinthians 13:4-8, 2 Corinthians 5:14

Topics: "John"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of relying on God's power rather than human programs or gimmicks. He uses the story of Jesus feeding the five thousand as an illustration of how Jesus works with what we have. The preacher highlights the need for complete surrender to God and the importance of reaching people through genuine love and care. He also discusses the disciples' lack of understanding and their focus on the cost of feeding the crowd rather than trusting in God's provision.

Transcript

I really am a bit sorry for you. Taking three lectures in the morning is pretty hard going, and two more at night. I don't know how you do it.

Change gear every hour, start and think of something fresh. But I'm sure people have said this to you before. Don't worry if you find it too much for you.

Don't get upset. Don't get yourself all screwed up about it into a sort of tension. That's no use.

Just relax. Take in what you can. Remember, you're receiving in lectures here over a period of six months truth that will last you for years.

And it's not merely what you get hold of here, it's what you... Well, if you get it down in notes, take it away with you in cassette form or something like that, you'll have it for your life. So don't try and take everything in. And if you're tired, relax.

As long as you keep quiet. But relax. I do want you to relax, because I relax.

And don't worry when you get upset. So don't make it an awful effort to give that bit of advice that probably you've had it not often before. But so many people try to take in everything, and if they don't get it all in their mind in a few months, they're a terrible state.

Think they're backsliding or something. No, no. Just take in what you can.

And if you can get cassettes afterwards, after the term is over, it's a very good idea. Especially of a series of lectures on a subject or a book of the Bible, and take it away with you. You'll be able to reflect upon it much more easily afterwards.

That's not to say I don't want you to be with me. I do. And we're going to read together a portion of John chapter 6 this morning.

John chapter 6. Have you got your notes somewhere? John chapter 6. Ready? After this, Jesus went to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, which is the Sea of Tiberias, and a multitude followed him, because they saw the signs which he did on those who were diseased. Interesting, isn't it? The crowd saw what the Pharisees didn't see. They saw the signs which he did on those who were diseased.

Jesus went up into the hills, and there sat down with his disciples. Now the Passover, the Feast of the Jews, was at hand. Lifting up his eyes, and seeing that a multitude was coming to him, Jesus said to Philip, How will you buy bread so that these people may eat? This he said to test him, for he himself knew what he would do.

Philip answered him, Two hundred denarii would not buy enough bread for each of them to get a little. One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to him, There is a lad here who has five boiled loaves and two fish. But what are they among so many? Jesus said, Make the people sit down.

Now there was much grass in the place, so the men sat down in number about five thousand. Jesus then took the loaves, and when he had given thanks, he distributed them to those who were seated. So also the fish, as much as they wanted.

And when they had eaten their fill, he told his disciples, Gather up the fragments left over, that nothing may be lost. So they gathered them up, and filled twelve baskets with fragments from the five boiled loaves, left by those who had eaten. When the people saw the sign which he had done, they said, This is indeed the prophet who has come into the world.

Perceiving then that they were about to come and take him by force to make him king, Jesus withdrew again to the hills by himself. When evening came, his disciples went down to the sea, got into a boat, and started across the sea to Capernaum. It was now dark, and Jesus had not yet come to them.

The sea rose, because the strong wind was blowing. When they had rode about three or four miles, they saw Jesus walking on the sea, and drawing near to the boat. They were frightened, but he said to them, It is I, do not be afraid.

Then they were glad to take him into the boat, and immediately the boat was at the land to which he was going. We'll leave it there at the moment, I think. Have you got your outline there? I hope you have, because you'll need it.

Just notice the point in this gospel to which we've arrived. We've seen controversy aroused in chapter 5, under the heading Life Antagonized. And now we see controversy developed in chapter 6 through 10.

Controversy developed. And here we survey the whole of chapter 6, which I have marked in three divisions. Not in the notes, but I'll give them to you.

The subject of it all, this whole chapter, is Jesus the bread of life. That's the key verse, really, verse 35. That great claim, that tremendous claim, that Jesus made, I am the bread of life, he who comes to me shall not hunger, and he who believes in me shall never thirst.

This is the longest chapter in the gospel, and the three divisions that I've put it into, are these. You might like to put these three divisions down, so you'll know where we are. 1 through 15, illustration.

1 through 15, illustration. 16 through 25, interruption. And 26 through 71, interpretation.

Interpretation of the illustration. You see how all that fits in, as we go through. Verses 1 through 15, I'm just giving you again, illustration.

Jesus the bread of life. That's the theme of the chapter. 1 through 15, illustration.

Verses 16 through 25, interruption. And then, verses 26 through 71, interpretation of the illustration. Long words.

I-N-T-E-R-P-R-E-T-A-T-I-O-N. Interpretation of the I-L-L-U-S-T-R-A-T-I-O-N illustration. Okay? Now this event described in these first verses, verses 1 through 14, the feeding of the 5,000 is the only miracle recorded in all of the gospels.

I think when we began the study of this gospel, I mentioned that. The only miracle recorded in all the four gospels, and it's critical in the ministry of Christ. It commenced the Lord's public ministry in Galilee.

And after this, he really spent most of his time training 12 disciples. This miracle, I repeat, commenced the Lord's public ministry in Galilee. And after it, he spent most of his time training his 12 disciples.

In the previous chapter, verse, chapter 5, he claimed to be the source of life. Verse 39 and 40. You search the scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life.

And it is they that bear witness to me. Yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life. He came to be the source of life there.

Now he claims to be the sustainer of life. I am the bread of life. The sustainer of life.

It might be well to have one little finger in Mark's account of this miracle. It's in Mark, chapter 6. Certainly put that down in your note. You often have the various accounts differ, not contradict, but differ and add details which make it most interesting.

And Mark tells us that this miracle followed a retreat. I don't know if that's the right word to use. A retreat that Jesus proposed for his disciples.

They had just returned from their first mission. They were all excited. Excited.

Tremendous things that God had done for them. And the response of Christ was to say, now look, you need a rest. Come your part and rest a while.

You'll find that in Mark 6. Let me just say because I'm not interested only in learning Bible facts, but in being practical in their application. There are times when rest is a necessary and a sacred duty. If Jesus needed rest, so do all of us.

Neglecting the body does not promote the health of the spirit. I'll repeat that. Neglecting the body does not promote the health of the spirit.

A clock runs down by ticking. And strength is used up by work. The Lord's work suffers when a Christian overworks.

The Lord's work suffers when a Christian overworks. I don't want to rust out. I prefer to burn out.

On the other hand, I'd rather last out. It's amazing how long a train can go on with the power shut off. Train driver, one of the express train drivers on the line that takes from Houston to Glasgow, flashes through Kansas at about 100 miles an hour.

And if he turned the power off, then the train would reach Scotland. It goes on for about 70 miles with the power shut off. Slowly, of course.

My word! How long can I go on as a Christian with the power shut off? Yes. I'm very embarrassed this morning because I'm having to say things to you that I've had to learn the hard way. I've had 18 months on my back with a cerebral hemorrhage 14, 16 years ago.

And I've had 3 months on my back, almost, during this last fall. Because I failed to observe the principles right here that I'm talking to you. I've gone on too long for too I've gone on too hard for too long.

No credit in that. And Jesus says, Halt! Make your road ahead. Learn that lesson, bless you, while there's time.

But the desert place here is invaded by a crowd who had seen his miracles. How do I react when a crowd interrupts a day off? A crowd had seen the miracles of Jesus and he had proposed a retreat. I love every word of that sentence.

Come you apart and rest awhile. Come! That means I'm coming too. You! That's individually.

Apart! Get away from the crowd. Apart! Away from action. Away from activity.

Come you apart and rest. Rest. Awhile, not forever.

A while. Every word of that I should underline. Mark chapter 6. Oh, you want me to give you the verse? I haven't put it down.

It's there, I'm sure. Found it? Verse 31, that's it. He said to them, come away by yourselves to a lonely place and rest awhile.

But a crowd interrupts that day and in Mark 6.35 the disciples propose that they should be sent away. Send them away. Jesus proposed an amendment.

You give them something to eat. They never even thought of that. Ha ha.

Oh, listen. It makes all the difference whether in every opportunity you see a difficulty and give up. Or, in every difficulty you see an opportunity and go ahead.

Can I just take the trouble to repeat that? It makes all the difference whether in every opportunity I see a difficulty and give up. Or, in every difficulty I see an opportunity and press on. Do you see that? We say,

oh, of course, God is able but there is difficulty.

That's paralysis. There are difficulties but God is able. That's victory.

Be careful where you put the but. Get me in the right sense, won't you? All right. I know.

It's a very important principle that got it? Eh? No, you haven't got it. Repeat. Oh.

Right. Come on then. Here we go.

You've heard about Mark 6.35 and Jesus proposing an amendment. Disciples saying, send them away. Jesus proposes an alternative.

You give them something to eat. It makes all the difference whether in every opportunity I see a difficulty and give up. Or, in every difficulty I see an opportunity and go right ahead.

We say, some people say, God is able. Oh, but. There are difficulties.

That leads to spiritual paralysis. On the other hand, we say, yes, there are difficulties, but God is able. That leads to power.

Be careful where you put the but. No. I think what was wrong of course, in the situation was that the disciples had never learned to see people as Jesus did.

They'd never learned to see people as Jesus did. They'd never learned to care. Just put two verses down, but don't trouble to look right now.

2 Corinthians 5.14. The love of Christ constrains me. And 1 Corinthians 13 verses 4 through 8. Love never fails. Patient, kind, etc.

2 Corinthians 5.14 and 1 Corinthians 13, 4 and 8. Got it? The only answer of the disciples to Jesus' suggestion was to reckon up what it would cost to feed that crowd. Verse 7. And to undertake to go to somebody else to get it. Their only reaction repeating was to reckon up what it would cost to feed that crowd.

Verse 7. And to undertake to go to somebody else to get it. Verse 9. One little boy's lunch. Now of course, before we say how stupid, let's just remind ourselves that our reaction how can we reach the crowd? They won't come to church.

So what can we do? Send them away. Oh, we never say that, of course. Wouldn't put it that way, but that's what we mean.

If they won't come, our responsibility ends. A friend of mine was a minister in Birmingham. Not Birmingham, Alabama, but Birmingham, England.

And he was a vicar there, minister in charge, and you know, every day at midday a train passed right beside his house. And he used to walk across the bridge and watch it come, and when it came under the bridge he would throw his hat in there and say, Hello there. Well, his congregation got to witness this and they said he's going mad.

So they summoned the bishop and asked the bishop to just see what was going on. So the bishop went to see this minister at midday. He was going down the garden, walking onto the bridge and the train arrives, and hallelujah! And the bishop says, Now sir, my dear friend, you cannot possibly do that.

He said, Why not? Well, I mean, it's not reasonable. Bishop, that train is the only thing that goes through my parish without me pushing it. Sweat and grind and toil and tears, and if people want to come to church we might as well shut down.

But there's something that can go through us and through other people without us pushing. And Jesus said, Give you them to it. That's his plan.

It never occurred to those disciples anything seems easier than to turn from the crowd and listen to Jesus saying, You give them something to eat. Never stopped to think about that. That's why we need to rest a while.

You see, the situation demanded a miracle. Not a program, not a beat rock group, no musical entertainment, but a miracle. Not a gimmick, but a miracle.

What did Jesus do? Verse 10. He sat them down and proceeded to give those disciples a lesson on his way of reaching people. Verse 10.

Which of course is still his way today. What did he do? I'll tell you. He set to work by using what he had.

Get that. He set to work by using what he had. Five loaves and two fish.

Verse 11. He took them. That of course is of first importance.

He works with what we have, but it must be all we have. He works with what we have, but it must be all we have. He must take over completely.

He only reaches men through men. I mean, that's in the generic sense, men and women. He only reaches people through people.

So does the devil. Oh, get this down word for word. Ready? Exhausted? Hold on another 20 minutes and you'll have your lunch.

Just a second. Wait. Get this down.

Every word of it. Ready to go? All right. The success of any movement depends on its ability to mobilize every member to propagate.

Long word. P-R-O-P A-O-O A-O-O I'm not sure. Sorry.

Oh dear. I must do something about that. P-R-O-P Do you think so? Well, it doesn't matter really, does it? Propagate.

P-R-O-P A-O-O G-A-T-E Propagate. It means, it means, of course you know what that means. Well, you look up the dictionary.

To propagate what it believes. Eh? I said, I thought it was. I'll repeat it.

I'll repeat it. The success of any movement depends on its ability to mobilize every member of it to propagate what it believes. That's why communism is so powerful.

Ever met a nominal communist? No. Ever met a nominal Christian? Yes. That's why the cults spread like wildfire.

Jehovah's Witnesses. Moonies. All the rest of them.

Every member propagates what they believe. I would like you to jot down some statistics. The average Evangelical church in the States and in Britain.

On Western society. Of the total membership in any church 5% don't exist. 5% don't exist.

10% can't be found. 25% never attend church. 50% never attend midweek service and prayer meeting.

75% have no missionary interest. Pardon? I'll repeat the whole thing at the end. 90% have no family worship at home.

And 95% never win anybody to Christ. Quotation from Christianity Today. You understand that's a magazine.

I don't mean Christianity Today. I mean Christianity Today. I really am in a muddle this morning.

You know what I mean, don't you? Christianity Today some time ago. All right. You get these clear because my word I find them shattering.

In the average Evangelical church 5% on the membership roll. 5% don't exist. 10% can't be found.

25% never attend church. 50% never attend midweek service and prayer meeting. 75% have no missionary interest.

90% have no family worship at home. And 95% never win anybody to Christ. That's a tragic commentary on the total breakdown of New Testament principles of church growth.

Got those figures? Right? Think of them tragic. Now just let's be careful about this. I'm not suggesting that God is an embarrassing, in an embarrassing position.

Because his love has involved him in a situation from which his power can't rescue him without our help. He needs nobody. But he's prepared to use anybody who will obey him.

And he doesn't begin to work at all until he has all we have. The mathematics of spiritual breakdown and disaster are 99% commitment to Jesus. Let me just say that again.

Say it quietly. Don't be so loud. Have you got those statistics clear? Good for you.

I'm saying it slow, I think. I'm not suggesting in saying that, that God has got himself in an embarrassing position. Because his love has involved him in a situation from which his power can't rescue him, unless we go to his help.

The Lord needs nobody. But he will use anybody who's prepared to obey him. He doesn't begin to work at all until he has all we have.

The mathematics of spiritual breakdown are 99% commitment. Our hope is not in five years at a seminary. Not as I didn't say cemetery, I said seminary.

Our hope isn't in that. It's not in a great mass of theological degrees. It's in the living God who's got all of you and can do anything he likes with you.

Lord Jesus, please in any situation take my obedience for granted. Jesus took the loaves. That's great.

And having taken them, he gave thanks. That's greater still. The moment anybody here, anybody anywhere worldwide, said Jesus take all of me.

There's a hallelujah in heaven. And Jesus give thanks. And how he blesses what he takes.

Mark tells us took the loaves, gave thanks, blessed them and broke them. How he strengthens and enables the life to which he's helped himself. That's shattering.

To see him go into business. That's what it is though. How he strengthens and enables and equips the life to which he's helped himself.

And how I have missed, how we have missed the thrill of heaven's resources for the task of reaching people. Because we've never entered in to the simplicity of his plan. Got that? No.

Right? Reverse gears. Start here again. I'm glad you want me to.

It is important. Very simple. Kindergarten stuff.

But oh boy it's what I need. You've got the bit about Jesus taking the loaves and giving thanks, right? How he blesses what he takes. How he strengthens and enables the life to which he's helped himself.

God's helped himself to my life. Without reservation. How I have missed the thrill of heaven's resources for the task of reaching people.

Because of having failed to enter in to the simplicity of his plan. Brother if you wait, if you wait for an evangelistic crusade, great as it will be, Benny Graham, Louis Palau, all the rest, great, great friends of mine. And they would say it with me.

If you wait for that and count on that, you'll never get the job done. But if you're a fellow or a girl who to whom the Lord has helped himself. That's the quickest and the surest way of reaching men and women for Christ.

It seems so much more reasonable to attempt it in some other way. Lots of committees. Lots of plans for building up young Christians.

Lots of it. But haven't you noticed when your life is totally committed to the Lord, you happen to go at it with tremendous effort. People come to you.

They want to know about Jesus. The hungry are left hungry. And people are unreached because they won't give up our plans and our machinery, and let Jesus take us and bless us.

And in place of that, because we think that's a bit too costly, in place of that, all the progress. Well, you know them. Got it? Still with me? You've got only another five minutes? Still with me? Alright.

Not asleep? But notice the next word in Mark's account. Mark chapter 6, verse 41. He broke the loaves.

He took them, blessed them, broke them, gave thanks. Mark 6, 41. All of what he takes, he breaks.

All of what he takes, he breaks. And he does it to his people, simply because he did it to himself. At the last supper, he took bread, blessed it, broke it, gave it to his disciples, saying, this is my body, broken, given for you.

Got that? And just flip over one page of your Bible to verse 57 of this chapter. As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so he who eats me will live because of me. Just note that verse and let me say one thing about it.

The, that's underlined, the thing which distinguishes a Christian is not his sincerity or his enthusiasm. The thing, the thing, which distinguishes a Christian is not sincerity or charity. Many people have that.

But you know what it is? It's a complete absence of self-confidence. It's a complete absence of self-confidence. Verse 57 again, As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, see, so he who eats me will live because of me.

I only live because my Father. And so you will only live because you eat of me. The thing that marks a Christian, distinguishes him from anybody, is his complete lack of self-confidence.

So in taking us he blesses, breaks us, so that we may have no confidence at all in anything or anyone other than himself. No strength except what I receive from him. No glory in my plan than his.

And I just got down in my notes, put it down. I want to just think it aloud right now today. Lord Jesus please make me small enough, humble enough, broken enough, for you to use.

But the church is looking for big men. Oh to be small enough, humble enough, broken enough, for Jesus to use me. Did I tell you? Oh yes, just time.

If I, did I tell you? If I did, shut me up. About a telephone conversation I had when I was pastor at Moody Church in Chicago, with a man in New Jersey who rang me up 900 miles away and said, we are looking for a pastor. Pastor asked, perhaps do you happen to know anybody in Chicago who might be available? And I thought up the names of two or three people I thought might be ready to meet, and I gave them to him.

Thought they might be ready to move. And then there ensued the most remarkable conversation I've ever had on the telephone. It lasted 50 minutes.

He was paying for the calls, I didn't believe. But he said, tell me, what college did they go to? What university did they attend? What did they major in? Etc. And 45, 50 minutes it went on and on and on.

And then at the end of it all, he said, well thank you Pastor Red Flowers for sparing your time, but frankly, none of these men are big enough for our pulpit. I squirmed inside. I really did.

I said, hi! Before you put that phone down my friend, listen. Not big enough? Are you quite sure you don't mean they're not small enough? The Lord is looking for the man who has no confidence in himself. If you want to have that confirmed, you can confirm it in your Bible, but you can't confirm it when you read books written by A. W. Tozer.

You should leave Capenry with a Tozer library. Prayer. Lord, we just need you in all your fullness to meet our emptiness.

Lord, take us, bless us, and break us. And somehow, as we ask you that, we hear you saying, thank you. Hear our prayer.

For your name's sake, Amen.

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